A PROPOSED SYNOPSIS

On

Myth as a Shifting Paradigm of Feminism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels The Palace of Illusions and The Forest of Enchantments : A Critical Study.

Submitted to

LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY

For the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

ENGLISH
(HUMANITIES)

8/4/24

Supervisor

Dr. Yugeshwar Sah

Assistant Professor

Department of English

C.M.Science College, Darbhanga

L.N.Mithila University Darbhanga

Anupam Kumari 8/04/24

Research Scholar

Anupam Kumari

University Department Of English

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY, DARBHANGA (BIHAR)-846004

Title:- Myth as a Shifting Paradigm of Feminism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels "The Palace of Illusions and The Forest of Enchantments: A Critical Study."

➢ Introduction:-

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is considered to be one of the greatest story tellers among the contemporary Indo-American English novelists. She has used various narrative techniques in her writing that set her apart from other Novelists. The present research paper focuses on the use of myth in the select novels. She uses different settings in her novels. No novel of Divakaruni is complete without the use of myths. Her protagonists are women in all her novels and through women characters, she depicts the deep rooted culture of Indian tradition.

Myth is described as stories from the past life that explain about the gods and the legends of history. Myth usually tells about natural or historical events. It is a folklore genre having stories that play a vital role in ruling the society. It consists of stories of gods, goddesses and supernatural human beings. Myths are closely linked with religious beliefs endorsed by priests, rulers and extraordinary human beings.

In English literature, the use of myth is an ancient tradition. Retelling of mythical stories, revisionist studies on mythical stories and mythical characters have now become a new field of exploration. Writers began to analyse mythical stories with feministic, cultural and psychoanalytic approaches. Reinterpretations are made on the greatest Indian epics The Mahabharata and The Ramayana. The women characters of the epics presented as an ideal epitome of patience and tolerance. But women are kept at the bottom of the social ladder. Their existence is neglected and suppressed. But the contemporary writers recreated, revised and redefined the female characters and gave them a new voice by making them strong and independent. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The

8/4/24

Palace of Illusions retells the story of an extraordinary woman Panchaali. She is the protagonist of the novel. Here, myth serves as an open medium to express the silent tears, dead hopes and repressed emotions of women. Panchaali's life and challenges remain as symbol for all women as they all are "unexpected" and not "invited" to the world.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantments is about the retelling of our ancient prestigious epic The Ramayana from Sita's perspective. As an Indian diasporic writer Divakaruni has nostalgia about Indian culture and tradition. The term culture comprises of behaviours and institutions for her attempts at retelling an ancient epic through woman's perspective. This novel focuses on the self discovery of Sita who is a celebrated female character in an ancient Indian epic. So, Divakaruni has changed her way of thinking from traditional portrayal of simple and selfless women into a modern female characters who are searching for their identities in the patriarchal world.

➢ Literature Review:-

Review of literature involves detailed literary study in the field of relevant subject. I have found some of the theses on Shodhganga @INFLIBNET Website. The Palace of Illusions and The Forest of Enchantments focus on the issues of a sense of alienation, nostalgia and quest for identity.

I have analysed some of the research works and books for the purpose of literature review.

- "Diasporic Identity: A Study of the Fictional Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni" (2017) by Chakarborty Banani.

  It shows considerable maturity and skill in handing both male and female characters. It is used to describe the experience of women who have been forced to leave their homeland.

8/4/24

- "Myths and Mythical Narratives Based on Indian Epics The Ramayana and The Mahabharata: A Study through the Revisionist Texts" (2018) by Noopur Srivastava.

  This paper is an attempt to give a close gaze at some of the intances to explore the impact of such myths in the longer run on the character.

- "Survival of Women in the Select Novels of Chitra Banejee Divakaruni: A Humanistic Approach" (2022) by Dr.V.Kavitha & Dr. K.Rajkumar.

  This book attempts to deconstruct the norms and experiences of women, their sufferings and hardships and the predicament of feminism.

  The proposed research surveys Indo-American Women's fiction critically and analytically. The study deals with women issues, hegemonic power structure, cultural conflict, diversity of thought, myth, magical realism, reinterpretation of epics and exploitation of women identity.

➢ Research Questions and Hypothesis:-

The present proposed research title is "Myth as a Shifting Paradigm of Feminism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels The Palace of Illusions and The Forest of Enchantments: A critical Study". Divakaruni explores the problems of self existence, gender discrimination separation and subjugation of women on the basis of race, class, gender and nationality. Women face plethora of problems in every corner of the world. Chitra Banerjee Presents various gender based issues in her fiction realistically and depicts the problems of nostalgia and immigration. All the protagonists of Chitra Banerjee expose the sufferings of women and how they overcome them with the motivating morals of myths.

Indian English novelists, especially women novelists are known to deal with the themes of oppression and subjugation. Therefore, most of

them tend to speak about the pathetic condition of women. Chitra Banerjee is also an Indo-American English novelist who makes use of various narrative techniques in her writings which are the unique blend of myth and women issues that set her apart from other novelists.

Hence, Chitra Banerjee's novels thematically and characteristically try to show self-discovery or self-identity that is inevitable as breathing in the contemporary Indian fiction.

Research questions:-

1. Why is it necessary to rewrite and reinterpret our great epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana in the 21st century?
2. How does this new interpretations of the leading female characters of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata influence the readers and society at large?
3. How will the portrayals of Draupdai and Sita be able to break the preconceived perspectives of patriarchy?
4. How will this shifting paradigm of feminism empower modern women of our society?
5. How does the myth serve as a new voice of feminism?

It is hypothesized that the proposed research proposal would provide a new paradigm on the portrayal of major women characters in our great epics namely The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. It is also hypothesized that rewriting, rethinking and reinterpreting myths is the need of the hour and it will change the preconceived and prejudiced patriarchal stereotypes regarding the image of women in the home and the world, and it will agitate, educate and empower them in the 21st century through breaking the glass ceiling. Further, it is supposed that this research would be able to provide the image of 'New Woman' who will be self-aware, self-reliant and skilled with all kinds of competencies and will not be

afraid of any socio-cultural hurdles and hindrances which try to limit woman in the periphery of the home and the hearth.

It is also speculated that woman will be perceived in the new incarnation in the same patriarchy orchestrated family and society through the subversion of discriminatory conventions, exploitative customs and customary practices which led to the commodificaion of women in our so called cultured and civilised society.

➢ Objectives of Research:-

1. To study myth and magical realism.
2. To analyse cultural conflict and diversity of thought.
3. To Explore the status and conditions of Indian women in Chitra Banerjee's novels.
4. To investigate female mythical stereotypes and their consequences.
5. To find out the causes of gender discrimination and exploitation.
6. To examine how myth serves as a new voice of feminism.

➢ Research Methodology:-

The present research is based on the study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's select fiction. Textual and descriptive methods will be used in this research. As a research scholar, I will visit various libraries to collect reading materials for the research work. Data collection is an important part in the research field. It has two parts, primary source and secondary source. The primary source includes Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works. The present research work centers on profound critical analysis of Indo-American fiction through the perspectives of socially depressed units. The

women characters are represented in the select fiction are socially, politically, and economically suppressed in the patriarchal society.

This research project will follow textual, critical, analytical, evaluative, interpretative and comparative study. Qualitative methods of research will also be used in this research. It will also include various literary criticisms and contemporary theories such as feminism, Marxism, psychoanalytic theory, myth and archetypal criticism. As the topic of research is interdisciplinary in nature, so reading materials from different disciplines such as literature, scriptures, mythology and theology will be used to carry out this research.

➢ Research Coverage:-

For the proposed research work I have selected two major novels which are based on the retelling and reinterpretation of The Mahabharata and The Ramayana.

"The Palace of Illusions" is a 2008 novel by award winning novelist. In The Palace of Illusions, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has portrayed Draupadi as the unforgettable protagonist who is no way inferior to Bheem or Arjun in strength and spirit, valour and virtues but still she is victimized almost every stage of her life by her own kith and kins.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantments (2019) is about the retelling of our ancient prestigious epic of The Ramayana from Sita's perspective. She clearly portrays the character of Sita from feminist perspective which refles modern women of our society. The novel focuses on quest for identity of Sita. The self discovery or self-identity is inevitable for modern women to prove their existence.

Apart from above mentioned two novels, this research work will also critically analyse Divakaruni's other novels such as:-

1. The Vine of Desire (2003)
2. Queen of Dreams (2005)
3. Oleander Girl (2013)
4. Arrange Marriage (1996)
5. Sister of My Heart (1999)

➢ Data Collection:-

The data for the research study will be collected from primary and secondary sources.

Important primary and secondary sources are as follow:-

Primary Source:-

1. The Palace of Illusions (2008)
2. The Forest of Enchantments (2019)
3. Sister of My Heart (1999)
4. Queen of Dreams (2004)
5. Arranged Marriage (1996)
6. Mistress of Spices (1997)

Secondary Source:-

The secondary source is the source that provides non-original or second hand information. It includes reference and different critical books on Chitra Banerjee's fiction.

The secondary source also includes biographies and critical studies by various researchers and their research papers published in national and international journals of English Literature.

➢ Contribution to the Field:-

The present research attempts to study about myth as a new voice of feminism in the select novels namely "The Palace of Illusions" and

"The Forest of Enchantments" written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Her novels deal with the simple and selfless women turned into modern female characters who are searching for their identities in the patriarchal world. Therefore, the scope of this study extends to theories of feminism, Marxism and psychoanalytic criticism.

The scope of present proposed research is based on myth as a shifting paradigm of new voice of feminism in the select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The women characters in her fiction are suffering form mental torture, unequal treatment and child marriage issues. She explores various issues of women in society, magical realism, myth and history.

It signifies the idea that appearances can be deceptive and that the world of privilege and power can be illusory. This research work will promote interdisciplinary and comparative research work on Chitra Banerjee. It will also empower women in society and will make them aware of their rights and duties. The women of our society will try to understand our great epics The Ramayana and The Mahabharata from different perspectives. This research work will empower women to voice against suppression, subjugation, discrimination and exploitation that are prevalent in our society.

➢ Structure of the Research Work:-

The present research is divided into five tentative chapters.

Chapter One:- Introduction

Chapter Two:- Myth as a New Paradigm of Feminism

Chapter Three:- The Palace of Illusions: Deconstructing Female Stereotypes

Chapter Four:- The Forest of Enchantments: Reincarnation of Sita

Chapter Five:- Conclusion

Reference:-

Beauvoir, Simon de. The Second Sex. trans. H.M. Parshley, Penguin,1972.

Devakaruni, Chitra Banerjee, Sister of My Heart: A Novel. Black Swan Book, 1999.

...The Vine of Desire: A Novel. Little Brown Books,2003.

...Queen of Dreams: A Novel Abacus, 2005.

...The Palace of Illusions: A Novel. Picador, 2008.

...The Mistress of Spices: A Novel. Anchor Books, 2009.

...One Amazing Thing: A Novel. Penguin Group, 2010.

...Oleander Girl: A Novel. Penguin Group, 2013.

...Before We Visit The Goddess: A Novel. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

...The Last Queen: A Novel. Harper Collins, 2021.

...Independence: A Novel. William Morrow,2022.

Kavitha, Dr.V. & Rajkumar, Dr. K. Survival of Women in the select Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni : A Humanistic Approach. Notion Press, 2022

Kumar, Dr. Manoj. Chitra Banerjee. Divakaruni, A critical Spectrum, Yking, 2017.

Singh, Amarjit. Field, Robine E, & et.al. eds.Feminism and Diaspora: Critical Perspective an Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rawat Publications,2023 .

6/4/24

Srivastav, Noopur & Payal Dutta Choudhary . "Myths and Mythical Narratives Based on Indian Epics The Ramayana and The Mahabharata: A study through the Revisiontist texts". Vedas Journal of English Language and Literature JOELL, Vol.5, no. 2018, PP.171-178.

Sushma, B. Image of the New Women in the fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruna, Prestige Book International 2018.

8/4/24

Signature of Supervisor

Anupam Kumari 8/04/24

Signature of Research Scholar